

The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 244

Winter 2024



PRESERVING ICONIC
NORTH BEACH

KIDS CORNER



by Sarah Kliban
kids@thd.org

Welcome to Kids Corner! THD wants to hear from kids in the neighborhood! If you'd like to ask a question, or you're a kid and want to be interviewed, please contact us at kids@thd.org.



ARISH ARVIND, 10

What's better...a snowball fight in winter or a water fight in summer?

"A snowball fight. I think they're fun. I haven't been to the snow much or had a big snowball fight, but I like them. I like the look of them. I like water fights, but I just like snowball fights more."

What are three things you'd really like to do next summer?

"Go to a *Star Wars*-only themed world. Another would be to travel somewhere with a bunch of my friends. Some place like Belize. The third would be to reunite with my friends from my old school. I miss them."

What is the worst gift you've ever received?

"I'm not really that happy when I see clothes as gifts unless they're *Star Wars* clothes."

What's an invention you'd like to make to help the world?

"I've been taking antibiotics so...probably medicines that actually taste good—or feel good. Most medicines taste terrible!"

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"Spark Social. It's a golf place where me and my friends go a lot. Or Urban Putt. It's fun to play mini golf with your friends."



MALANA POWELL, 7

What's better...a snowball fight in winter or a water fight in summer?

"A snowball fight in winter. I really like to go to the snow because I can be at my grandma's house because there's snow there, and I can play with my cousin Lily."

What are three things you'd really like to do next summer?

"Swimming at a fancy hotel swimming pool. I would like to go to Japan and go to the Pig Donut restaurant. The pigs come to you, and you get to hold them. And there are these pig-shaped donuts. And Disneyland! To see baby ducks there. I saw a video with a dude who got to feed a duck and pet it."

What is the worst gift you've ever received?

"A creepy snowman puppet. It has a creepy face, and you can move it around. My grandpa gave it to me for Christmas. Like an olden days' snowman."

What's an invention you'd like to make to help the world?

"A trash picker-upper. It picks up trash on land and in the ocean, so no animals are in danger. Like turtles. Plastic bags get caught in their bodies, and that makes them die."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"My room. It has my childhood pictures from when I was in preschool. I want to grow up to be an artist. I also like being here because I have a loft in my room. My dad and grandpa built it."



JASPER SCAGLIOTTI, 10

What's better...a snowball fight in winter or a water fight in summer?

"A snowball fight in winter because you can also do different things with the snow. It's kind of fun to interact with snow. You can pack it together differently than water. I like the snow."

What are three things you'd really like to do next summer?

"I would love to hang out with my friends on a

vacation...in like, maybe, Italy or somewhere in Europe. Play more soccer because I like playing it a lot. And spend time with my family on vacation."

What is the worst gift you've ever received?

"I remember when I got socks from my grandmother for Christmas. I was kind of bummed. That's the only one that I remember. They were big socks. I was hoping for a Lego set."

What's an invention you'd like to make to help the world?

"Maybe like something that could get rid of all man-made poisons and stuff. You could spray, and it would get rid of all of the poison. And something to put in the sewer that rolls down in the sewer and cleans everything up. On wheels with sponges."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"I love hanging out at my friends' house. All the time I spend there is fun. We play board games and card games. Sometimes in their back yard we do soccer. And sometimes I play on their Xbox."



ELLIOT CLARKE, 13

What's better...a snowball fight in winter or a water fight in summer?

"Snowball fight in winter. Snowballs. You're in your snow gear, and you make your own ammo. You don't have to go and refill it. It's more exciting."

What are three things you'd really like to do next summer?

"I'd love to become a soccer referee. It's fun, and it pays decent money. And I'd love to sail some more. I'd like to go see family in England, near London."

What is the worst gift you've ever received?

"Socks. Whenever you get socks, it's like, 'Really? Come on.' How are socks interesting? It's not just parents, grandparents. Everyone gives me socks. I think it's a coordinated scam. A coordinated attack."

What's an invention you'd like to make to help the world?

"A water purifier that's cheap or almost free. For everyone. For people who don't have clean, accessible tap water. Dirty water kills a lot of people. It feels good to help people."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"I like just hanging out. I like Aquatic Park. It's fun for swimming. It's a good beach, and it's not too busy. You warm up. There are seals that come pretty close to shore."

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Dwellers!



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and become part of this
active community!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Stan Hayes
President@thd.org

2023. Here's hoping it finished with a fine flourish for you. The joys of holidays, the warmth of family and friends, and the celebration of neighborhood on and near the Hill. Appropriately accompanied by the sparkling of Bay Bridge lights, the bursting of Ferry Building fireworks, and the bubbling of champagne. Of course, there was the inevitable consequence of 10,000-calorie-a-day living to be confronted. Ah, but it was worth it all, right?

2024. Full of promise, new beginnings, and hope, we hope. If you like elections, this is your year. President, US senator, US congressperson, state senator, state assemblyperson, mayor, District 3 supervisor, and an assortment of thought-provoking and thoughtful (not always) ballot measures. All are yours to consider and decide, in this great and precious democracy of ours. Depending on the outcome, your votes might determine where and how we are next New Year in 2025 and beyond, as a country, a city, and in this wonderful neighborhood in which we are all so lucky to live.

Lots of things to report on this time. Here are some of them.

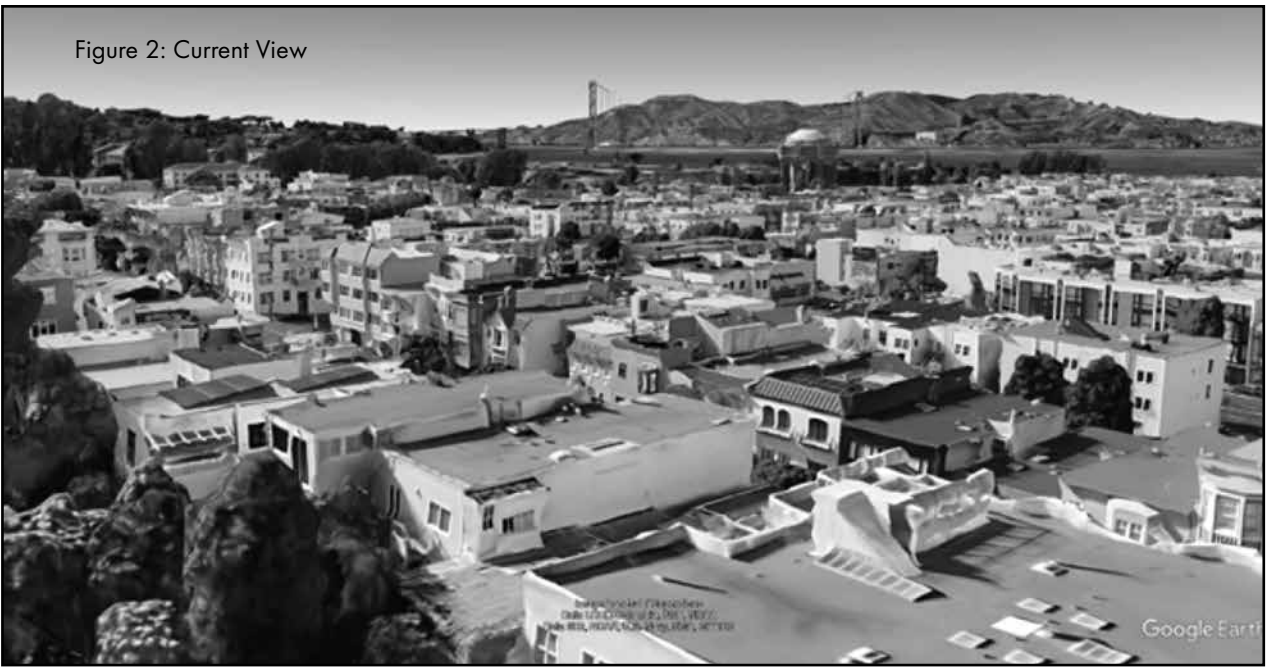
70th THD Anniversary. THD was founded in 1954. That means 2024 is the 70th anniversary of THD. The excitement is building! We're going to celebrate our anniversary later in 2024. (Stay tuned for details.) Those in the know also know that our iconic neighbor, Coit Tower, will celebrate the 90th anniversary of its opening to the public in 1934. We're hoping to take advantage of this welcome and timely synchronicity.

Holiday Party. More than 50 happy THDers enjoyed each other's company celebrating the holidays with a great party at Indie Wine and Beer Bar. For all of its 70 years, one of THD's most important (and fun!) goals has been to BUILD COMMUNITY. That's why THD holds this Holiday Party and social and art/culture programs like it throughout the year. To bring us all together. Building community.

We were delighted and honored to welcome and hear from President of the Board of Supervisors and District 3 Supervisor Aaron Peskin, who, as former THD President, is one of our most distinguished alums. We also offered a huge thanks to THD's Social and Program Chair Kristen Foley for her excellent efforts organizing the party.

Happily transacting some timely membership business, THDers unanimously adopted a resolution: "BE IT RESOLVED: That the board and membership of THD wish everyone, from all of us to all of you and yours, a Happy Holidays and wonderful New Year in 2024."

2023 THD Accomplishments. At the Holiday Party, recognizing how busy 2023 was, a number of THD accomplishments during the year were highlighted. For example, we added more than 100 new members, and we held more than 20 social events. We



organized town hall meetings on affordable housing and ballot forums, fought against Sacramento's hostile takeover of City land use controls, and helped Friends of the Urban Forest plant more than 50 new trees on and near Telegraph Hill. We sponsored a six-month innovative North Beach film series, and we commented and spoke to the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and many other city and regional bodies.

For more details on these accomplishments, you can find them listed elsewhere in this issue of *The Semaphore* and on THD's website at thd.org/accomplished. Of all these accomplishments, one of the things of which we're most proud is the quarterly publication of *The Semaphore*, which has been telling the stories of the Hill for nearly 60 years and does so again with this issue.

Upzoning San Francisco. According to SF Planning, expanding housing choice is "one of the key implementation actions of San Francisco's Housing Element. Under state law, San Francisco is required to adopt compliant rezoning before January 2026." To meet this goal, the mayor is requiring that SF Planning "submit a final zoning proposal for consideration by policymakers by January 2024."

Figure 1 shows the height and density changes proposed by SF Planning. Depending on the location,

the proposed changes would upzone much of the City to building heights significantly higher than currently zoned. Some proposed heights would be as high as 300 feet (30 stories), and other areas would range from 65 feet (six stories) to 85 feet (eight stories) to 140 feet (14 stories) or 240 feet (24 stories).

THD has joined a group of thus far more than a dozen long-established organizations across northern San Francisco to form Neighborhoods United San Francisco (NUSF), all of which have signed a joint letter opposing the proposed height increases, urging SF Planning to reconsider its approach. Among other things, the letter states:

"We are concerned that large swaths of San Francisco are being upzoned with most people not even aware of it. We are concerned that, however well intended, upzoning will not work, that it is based on a fundamentally flawed real estate version of 'trickle-down' economics, that it will not deliver the affordable housing that we need, and that it does not address the underlying financial conditions affecting the housing market (e.g., interest rates, lending availability). We are especially concerned that height limits in place for decades are being overrun with little or no input from the public, putting the scale and character of our neighborhoods at risk, forever changing what we all love about San Francisco."

"We do not support these proposed height limit changes across northern San Francisco which could fundamentally change the predominantly low-rise, fine-grained landscape of San Francisco and remove important community input from the planning process. Moreover, many of the parcels slated for these increases already possess rent-controlled housing or important neighborhood servicing businesses and this could lead to losing more existing affordable housing than what may be gained."

An example of the effect SF Planning's proposed upzoning could have on the Marina District is illustrated in Figure 2. This example focuses on the intersection of Lombard and Divisadero Streets, where four buildings up to 140 feet (14 stories) would be allowed, with the balance of most of Lombard allowing buildings up to 85 feet (eight stories).

THD is your organization, working for you. Please let me know at President@thd.org how you think we're doing. What we're doing well, what we need to do better, or what you wish we were doing.

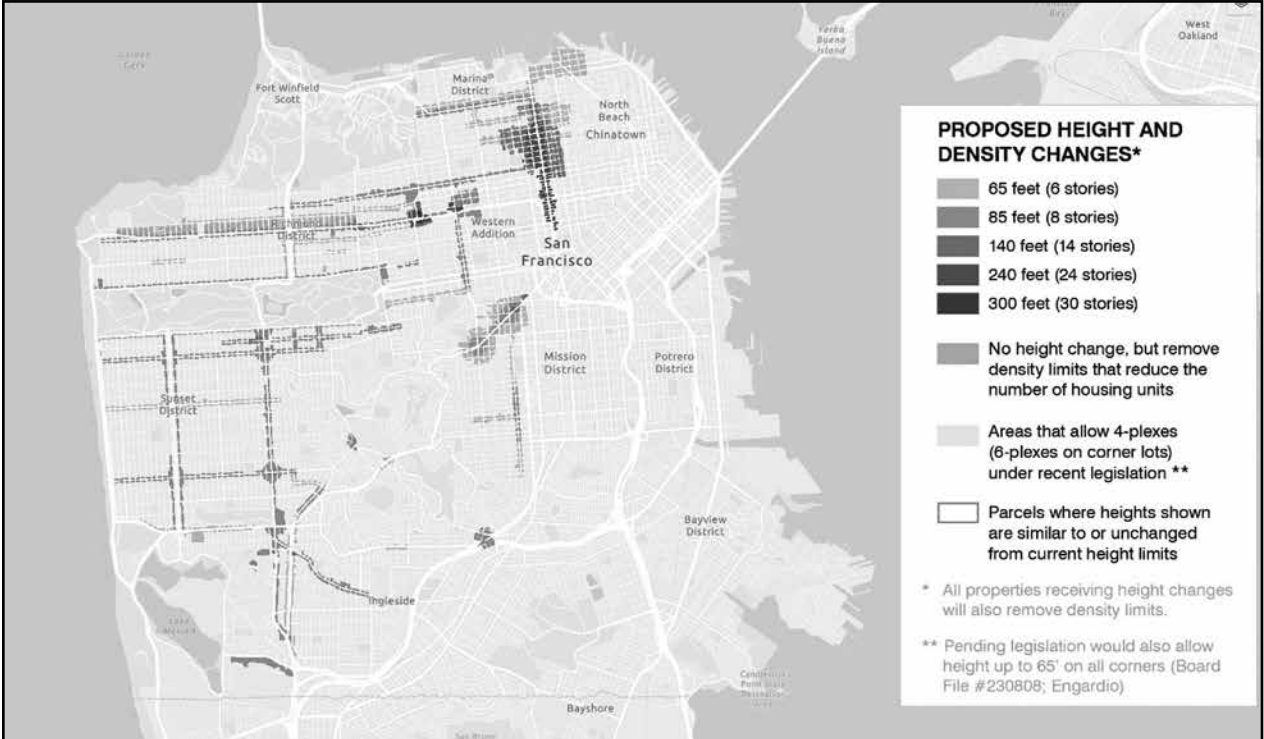


Figure 1. Height and density changes proposed by SF Planning

SELECTED THD ACCOMPLISHMENTS – 2023

- We added more than 100 new members.
- We published *The Semaphore*, a quarterly publication telling the stories of Telegraph Hill, North Beach, and the Northeast Waterfront for more than 60 years.
- Every First Friday of the month, we met at Caffè Trieste, first for conversation and fun and then to wander the streets of North Beach together, sampling the many amusements of First Fridays.
- Every Third (Thirsty) Thursday of the month, we gathered for fun and friendship at Savoy Tivoli, celebrating everything and nothing in particular, enjoying each other's company and discovering new best friends we didn't even know we had.
- We successfully worked to restore and grow our urban tree canopy, including joining in Friends of the Urban Forest's filling of more than 50 empty tree basins in and near Telegraph Hill, sponsoring thousands of dollars of new trees, one of THD's largest commitments of funds for trees in our history.
- We won a major victory at the Board of Appeals, saving trees that were threatened with destruction by a developer.
- We organized two town hall meetings on affordable housing, with a third planned in Winter 2024, and we held ballot forums.
- Every third Wednesday for six months, working with the film collective Those Guys, we sponsored the exciting and innovative Films with Friends,



- with as many as eight different venues and films each time, spread across the evening.
- We joined with Shaping SF to celebrate its 25th anniversary and an evening of North Beach and Telegraph Hill history, and we added new oral histories to our website.
- Staffed by more than 20 THDers, we organized a hugely successful THD booth at the North Beach

- Festival, recruiting nearly 40 new members and raising more than four times the money as in previous years.
- We joined with other organizations to fight Sacramento's hostile takeover of City land use controls, which will impact our neighborhood for years to come.
- We engaged with the Port and played an active role in a series of important projects affecting the Northeast Waterfront, including a successful effort to block the misguided Ferry Building renovation proposed by the Port's manager, and we engaged on the Port's Waterfront Resilience Program and Draft Waterfront Adaptation Strategies.
- We wrote letters and presented comments interacting with the City and others on a wide range of projects before the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Entertainment Commission, Board of Appeals, Municipal Transportation Agency, the Port's Waterfront Design Advisory Committee, and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Design Review Board.
- We served on the Port's Northern Advisory Committee and Historic Preservation Technical Advisory Committee, and we were named as consultants to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Port's Waterfront Resilience Program. ♦

MARY ETTA PRESTI MOOSE 1928 – 2023

by Judith Robinson

Mary Etta Moose, 95, passed away peacefully on December 23, 2023, at her home in North Beach, San Francisco. She was a popular and well-loved fixture as co-owner and founder of two restaurants, the original Washington Square Bar & Grill in the 1970s and, later, Moose's, located across the Square. She was one of three St. Louisians who relocated to San Francisco in the 1960s, including her husband Ed Moose and their partner Sam Deitsch.

Born December 21, 1928, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Mary Etta Presti was the daughter of a Welsh mother whose father had been a Mississippi River boat captain and a Sicilian father whose family roots were in the historic town of Cefalù. When her father lost his job as an oil company executive in the Depression, he became a wholesale meat salesman, a skill learned from his father who owned a delicatessen where he made sausages in a small Louisiana town. The Presti family moved to St. Louis where Mary Etta grew up.

One of five children, Mary Etta was 13 when her mother asked if she would be willing to work part-time to augment the family income. Stating, "I started at a drugstore counter downtown," Mary Etta then went to the Park Plaza Hotel coffee shop where she became a short-order cook—her first exposure to cooking for the public. She attended Washington University where she majored in English and Harris Teachers College, then taught briefly before taking a job at the Baldwin Locomotive Works as a train router. She also worked in the record department of a department store, helping program its radio show. In the 1950s, she held a position as a "Girl Friday" for the Landesman brothers, Alfred (Fred), Jay, and Eugene, entrepreneurs who made the St. Louis Gaslight area into a popular nightclub attraction.

It was there that she met Ed Moose and Sam Deitsch, both of whom had moved to San Francisco in the early 1960s. Mary Etta followed, and she and Ed married on December 18, 1964. In 1973, with other investors, Ed and Mary Etta and Sam acquired, reportedly for \$25,000, a former speakeasy bar facing Washington Square from Rose Evangelista whose husband was known as "Pistola" for carrying a pistol.

Washington Square Bar & Grill (nicknamed the "Washbag" by journalist Herb Caen) grew into a popular restaurant and destination for celebrities nationwide. It was sold in 1989. After a three-year prohibition against their owning a restaurant in close proximity ended in 1992, the partners took over a former furniture store across the park and opened Moose's (sold in 2005). Sam Deitsch (born in 1929) died February 1, 2002. Ed Moose (also born in 1929) died in 2010.

Meanwhile, in San Francisco, Mary Etta

worked in public relations for some years and took pride in managing the restaurants' kitchens. She enjoyed telling the story of comedian Phil Harris's coming into the restaurant one day in the early 1980s with ducks that he had shot. He asked if the cook would prepare them for dinner. Mary Etta took them to the kitchen, and the cook did just that.

A devoted theater and operagoer, she and Ed traveled to Europe, Africa, and Alaska and enjoyed the company of politicians, business people, and entertainers, many of whom went to the Moores' home in North Beach after the bar closed. Those included author Tom Wolfe, musician Shelley Manne, comedians Jonathan Winters, the Smothers Brothers, and Richard Pryor whom Mary Etta encouraged to do a routine about his grandmother that became legendary.

In a *San Francisco Examiner* feature story (July 14, 1985), Mary Etta cited her favorite book as Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*, her favorite music as Mozart's, and baking bread as her favorite hobby. She was admired for her infectious good nature, spirit, and ability to smooth things over, often with humor capped by her glass-shattering laugh.

She was a quiet and generous philanthropist to individuals and causes including St. Anthony's Dining Room in San Francisco. She was a dedicated supporter of the North Beach neighborhood and politicians who shared a desire to maintain the area's environment and character.

Mary Etta leaves her sister Veronica Reed and brother-in-law Gary Reed of Sebastopol and many

nephews and nieces. The family wishes to thank longtime caregivers provided by the Institute on Aging. Donations in her memory may be made to the St. Anthony Foundation (150 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, 94102) or Doctors without Borders.

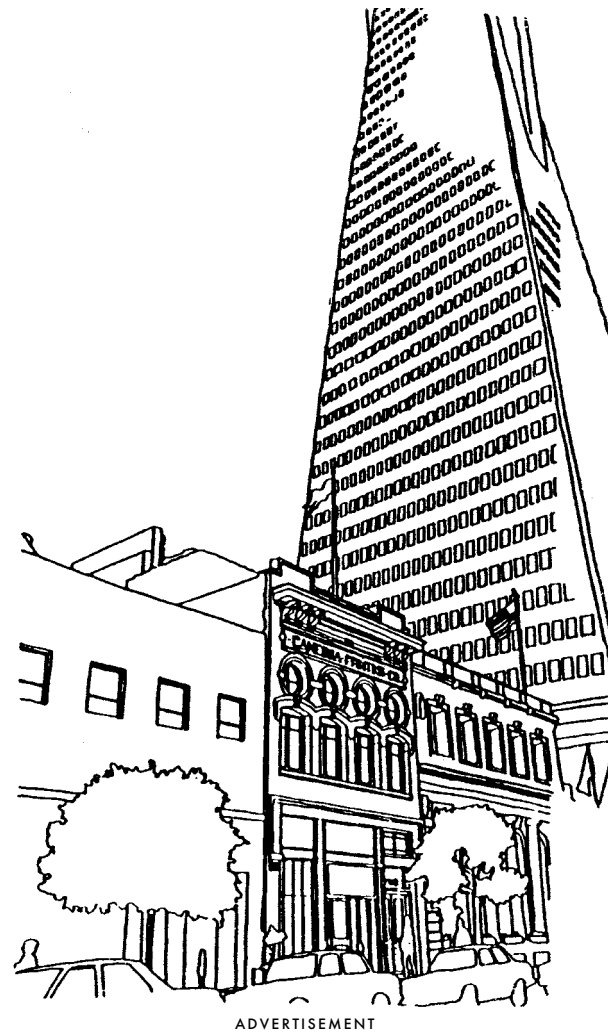


Mary Etta Moose
COURTESY VERNICA REED



Ed, Mary Etta, and partner Sam Deitsch in 1998 at Moose's.

© TERRY LORANT





DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

While I'm excited for the work ahead in 2024, 2023 came with many legislative victories and lessons that are worth celebrating and reflecting on.

Public Safety

I was proud to have pushed for a centralized Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to address the open-air drug supermarkets in Civic Center and Mid-Market. After numerous tours and working group meetings, the EOC's leadership has transitioned from the Department of Emergency Management to the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). While significant strides were made shutting down blatant drug dealing in the lead-up to the APEC Summit, we have seen a backslide in conditions now that world leaders have left. The working coordination and resource sharing between the SFPD, California Highway Patrol, Sheriffs, BART Police, and the Drug Enforcement Administration proved that we can target drug dealing when we want, particularly given the significant budgetary investment we have made in local law enforcement.

I will be serving on the Budget & Appropriations Committee for the final year of my last term. I will continue to look at how we can maximize public safety dollars with greater accountability and a focus on recruiting and training up community foot patrols and rightsizing the command staff. In addition, our public safety budget should be focused on stopping the illegal and deadly drug trade and sophisticated crime rings targeting our commercial corridors citywide—versus filling our jails with people in need of substance abuse treatment. Even our District Attorney has now admitted that the Mayor's strategy of incarcerating addicts has not and is not working. The months of hard work leading up to APEC prove that we can have a successful common sense public safety agenda with coordinated support from the State and Federal government.

Small Business

I am proud that North Beach continues to thrive post-pandemic and has quickly become one of the most vibrant neighborhoods for small business activity and nightlife. Our office worked tirelessly through the pandemic to make sure that merchants could safely operate in place and new small businesses could open. While we have recently seen a couple of key restaurants close, our commercial vacancy rate is one of the lowest in the City, and more new shops are launching. Among the significant additions to the neighborhood are the refurbishment and reopening of Club Fugazi as an acrobatic sensation; our first full-service neighborhood grocery store, Luke's Local, which my Chief of Staff worked on resolutely; mouth-watering bakery Butter & Crumble; the reincarnation of the old Rose Pistola as Flour + Water Pizzeria; and the relocation of Sai's Vietnamese Restaurant, which I was proud to help negotiate with the new owners of the Transamerica Pyramid.

I've been delighted to help artists find new studio spaces in our North Beach alleyways and to see the success of North Beach First Fridays, even during the pandemic, as well as activations that our office has sponsored, from SF Noodlefest to the Emperor Norton Place christening celebration.

In the new year, make sure to welcome new neighbors Andrew Paul Nelson and Caitlyn Skye Wild, who will be opening poetry book & bottle shop Golden Sardine, in the old North Beach Family Café space, as well as Chris Renfro of the Two Eighty Project, who will be taking over Flora's old paprika shop on Columbus Avenue and turning it into a local bottle and spice shop called 'Friend Of A Friend.' Finally, be on the lookout for Tony Gemignani's new billboard campaign at Washington Square, featuring local artists' loving promotion of our neighborhood.

Downtown Revitalization

My office spent a significant amount of time working on various strategies to revitalize our neigh-

HAPPY YEAR OF THE DRAGON!

boring downtown. My Downtown Adaptive Reuse legislation streamlined office to residential conversions, while we met with everyone from building owners to potential largescale tenants, such as university and trade schools, night market operators, arts groups, and entertainment and leisure companies. We even met with an international sauna and waterpark company and have been working hard in recruiting potential anchor tenants.

I've been engaged with the new owners of the Transamerica Pyramid on their preservation and rehab efforts of this iconic site that would include highlighting the Redwood Forest and returning to William Pereira's late 1960s/early 1970s cherry-tree-lined vision for the historic Mark Twain alley, itself becoming a true pedestrian promenade for the neighborhood to enjoy.

We have worked closely with the Fisherman's Wharf CBD, the Downtown Partnership, the Union Square Alliance, and other downtown stakeholders to draw up public realm plans that build economic opportunities around the character and cultural identities of these historic neighborhoods bordered by Market Street and the Embarcadero.

Finally, I have created a Special Use District to preserve the arts & cultural higher education's use of the old San Francisco Art Institute site and am excited at the potential for the new ownership group to revive its storied legacy as a historic arts hub.

Affordable Housing

Wages for working families have not kept up with the cost of housing, interest rates and construction costs soaring in an increasingly volatile lending market. And, the State's egregious overstep in upzoning and developer incentives has not generated any support for affordable homes, either financially or construction-wise. I worked very closely with colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, as well as in the community, to develop and adopt a Housing Element with strong protections for tenants and historic resources, that would help guide the City's work to plan long-term for equitable development across our diverse neighborhoods. While the State approved our Housing Element, it has since gutted many of our tools to realize fully this long-term housing plan, including community input.

Despite the fact that San Francisco has passed significant pieces of legislation to speed up the permitting process, create more development opportunities by effectively eliminating single-family zoning citywide, increasing density, and reducing development fees, the State and San Francisco's own state elected representatives continue to hand down unrealistic, punitive mandates that will lead to high-rise development along our waterfront and tear apart our neighborhood fabric.

Our State Senator Scott Weiner has ignored the lack of development in other jurisdictions and maliciously targeted San Francisco for special draconian

punishment, despite the fact that San Francisco is shouldering the burden of much of the housing development in the Bay Area. To add insult to injury, while the State has mandated that San Francisco approve 82,000 new homes in the next eight years—with 46,598 of those units affordable (57%)—it has neither allowed us to count the 72,000 already entitled units towards this requirement *nor* allocated any funding to help finance or construct any of these units, in particular the desperately-needed affordable housing.

State Assemblyman Matt Haney blames the high cost of rent on San Francisco's lack of housing approvals, despite reports that real estate companies are using algorithmic software to inflate rents and engage in widespread rent-fixing in the middle of an economic downturn. Meanwhile, his supply and demand rhetoric makes no sense when tens of thousands of residential units continue to sit vacant, according to a report by San Francisco's own Chief Economist.

Not to be discouraged, communities across San Francisco and the Bay Area are organizing to demand land use policy and deep investment that prioritizes keeping our most vulnerable communities intact and stable. Please reach out to my office if you are interested in getting involved.

YES on Proposition A

Finally, I am proud to have championed our latest \$300 million Affordable Housing Bond (Prop A) for the March 5, 2024 ballot that would create 1,500 units of new affordable housing units for our seniors, first responders, teachers, and struggling families. It is an example of what we can accomplish together when we work collaboratively and has secured the support of the Mayor, the SF Democratic Party, the Labor Council, and everyone from private market-rate developers to trusted affordable housing developers.

In addition, I have ensured that \$30 million from this bond will be dedicated specifically to building stable safe housing for women who have experienced street violence, domestic violence and abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, or trauma-informed homelessness. The *San Francisco Chronicle's* 2023 expose on the horrors of women unable to get gender-based housing placements, along with my work with the Women's Housing Coalition, have informed my decision to dedicate this first-of-its-kind investment in the bond.

The bond will provide affordable housing for seniors on fixed incomes who are burdened with skyrocketing housing costs. And it will also help first responders to live in the city that they serve, so that when an earthquake strikes, we have emergency professionals nearby and ready to respond.

The bond implementation is subject to independent annual financial audits, a review of all spending by a citizens' oversight committee, and a requirement that no funding can be used for administrators' salaries or pensions. By law, all funds are required to be spent only on the specified housing projects defined in the bond.

Best of all, it will not raise property tax rates, given the City's long-standing policy of only issuing as much debt as we retire. I am very proud of this opportunity to demonstrate that San Francisco knows how to take care of its own—and will do its part locally to fund and construct quality affordable homes for our neighbors. This bond will require 2/3 of the electorate's support, so please pick up a "YES on A" sign today and get involved. Tell your neighbors and be a part of the transformative solution of affordable housing!

Happy New Year and see you in the neighborhood,
Aaron



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ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Nanci Gaglio, Committee Chair
nanci.gaglio@thd.org

In Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1957), at 10 minutes in, Jimmy Stewart's character Scottie is in conversation with Elster who plans to leave San Francisco because he says, "San Francisco's changed. The things that spell San Francisco to me are disappearing fast."

How many times have we heard that kind of "isn't what it used to be..."? Almost every day, I hear from residents and non-residents the echoes of that sentiment. Annoys me to death when they don't live here and haven't visited in years.

My opinion is that each of us has that fond memory (or memories) of when it was so much better. Ahhh...that San Francisco when.... (Fill in the blank.)

For me, every day is the best day to live here

SAN FRANCISCO WAS BETTER WHEN...

despite its ongoing issues and problems. We're vibrant, growing, and evolving. We always have been.

However, if pressed, I'd say it was better when we were still smoking cigarettes in Tosca Cafe, and all of the comedians and actors who were anchored in the City (or nearby) got shitfaced drunk on any night during the week. Maybe Mondays or Tuesdays. Oh, those were the days. I could tell stories. If only...

What were yours? We'd truly like to know. Please email nanci.gaglio@thd.org. And I'll post answers in the next *Semaphore*. You can be anonymous (or not).

And if you're a MAGA (or not), tell us what made America great once upon a time. Similar to the good old SF days, give us a memory of your better America.

Evolution is inevitable.

As for Films with Friends: We closed our Season 1 with *Cinema Paradiso* and *Killer Klowns from Outer*

Space with in-person klowns Harrod Blank and Mike Martinez at the Savoy Tivoli. It rained that night, and President Biden was in town for APEC. Helicopters flew overhead. Traffic to North Beach was nearly impossible. But—the KLOWNS CAME OUT!

We hope you were there and had scary fun. Films with Friends will be back in June 2024. Stay tuned for more!

Come join Films with Friends. You can email me, nanci.gaglio@thd.org, to do that as well. We just received fiscal sponsorship and have dreams to turn our community into a neighborhood cinema space for all of us who want to see films and movies you won't normally see elsewhere.

And please share your memories that stamp "once upon a time when...was better."



Ray guns stun the audience.

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Q&A with a Killer Clown.

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RESTAURANT NEWS

We are delighted to offer another iteration of Restaurant News. This time, George Schumm tells us about dining at delectable Italian eatery Bocconcino, 516 Green Street, including the surprise event that occurred during his visit.

BOCCONCINO

First, George Schumm invites us to a delicious dining venue.

I'm no foodie or even especially fond of eating out. But after a visit to Bocconcino, opened at 516 Green Street this past autumn, I might have to rethink that.

Cap Caplan and I took a house guest there for a try. The place features casual but elevated dining, with authentic Italian fare and hospitality, though there's also a small bar in the back for those who might want to stop in just for a glass of wine. Nothing pretentious. Just consistently outstanding food, prepared from fresh local ingredients and beautifully presented. The pasta is all handmade and cooked *al dente*.

Rosario Priocini, the chef and owner, is a delight and very much hands-on. He's an animated presence in the room, conversing with diners, sometimes taking orders or answering the phone himself, playing the consummate host. The fact that he only occasionally set foot in the kitchen speaks volumes for his staff.

Bocconcino ("little mouthful"), indeed! The portions here are generous to a fault. The pasta and clams—or, more accurately, pasta swimming in clams—had twice the numbers of crustaceans one would have expected. The gnocchi and filet of sole entrées, if with a shared side dish, could each satisfy two people.

Substitutions, and even special orders, are not an issue. "I'll make whatever you want," Rosario said. "The menu is merely a suggestion."




Caprese salad. COURTESY BOCCONCINO

So impressed, we returned two days later with another house guest. There were two empty tables, ours and one that looked like it would seat about ten people.

Our companion, a vegetarian, not finding an entrée he wanted, asked if he could just have a green salad and some pasta. With Rosario's patient, well-articulated proposals ("Is that something you'd like?"), the fellow

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Rosario Priocini, owner and chef. © DAVID LIPKIN

was soon sold on the house salad, a lovely confection of romaine and butter lettuce, red onions, white beans, and red wine vinegar, plus a specially prepared pasta primavera.

Part way through dinner, the *Star Wars* theme music began blaring. In walked a white-haired gentleman in a long black jacket, swear he was 7 feet tall, and strode around the room handing out large, glossy, promotional photos of Daniel Logan in his acclaimed role as Boba Fett in *Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones*. The actor himself entered together with

Then Lucy Johns reminds us of the luscious fare at Elena Mediterranean Cuisine, 347 Columbus Avenue. For Joe Bonadio's full-page review of this restaurant appearing in *The Semaphore* last year, see thd.org/semaphore, scrolling to the Winter 2023 issue.

Dear readers, please let us know where you've dined lately and loved every bite! Email semaphore@thd.org.

Cap Caplan, Editor

a sizable entourage to a shout of "He's in the house!" (Seems he was in town for Comic Con.) Bedlam! People standing about, Logan and the giant—I presume a publicist—circulating, striking up conversation and autographing glossies, diners wandering around taking pics or posing for them, even three members of the kitchen staff slipping out for a peek at the action. Seemed like it went on for 20 or 30 minutes.

Rosario looked stunned, but realizing this was merely his large booking making an entrance, handled it with aplomb, greeting his new guests enthusiastically while still attending to other diners. Orders continued to be taken and dishes emerged from the kitchen on cue.

Our house guest had his glossy signed for a young *Star Wars* fan back home, with Logan adding "Stay awesome." My thought precisely. Stay awesome, Bocconcino!




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Chicken piccata with vegetables. COURTESY BOCCONCINO

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ELENA MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

Now, Lucy Johns offers a love letter to this exquisite Mediterranean gem. This is a restaurant review that's not about the food. It's about a hidden North Beach gem, not on a side alley or far corner but right on Columbus Avenue obscured by the oversized parklet next door. If you weren't looking, you'd miss it, and many people do. Look for the mural of the lemon on the wall. Elena is unique in our saturated, foodie destination, a small, quiet, intimate place animated by lime green walls, warm, attentive service, low, listenable music, and big windows to watch the passing crowds.

Nader Parhizgari owns his dream restaurant and serves the marvelous dishes cooked in a tiny kitchen—how do they do it? Yes, the food is exquisite, like you'd find off the beaten track in a Parisian quartier radiating centuries of perfect dining wherever in that city. It's Mediterranean in taste, starting with luscious hummus with a scatter of crunchy marinated chickpeas and a green spring salad—in California, it's always spring—watered by unusual dressing and, yes, those delicious, unexpected chickpeas. Salmon just right on a bed of scrumptious farrow outlined by sweet, hot cherry tomatoes, superb red snapper grounded in excellent basmati rice. Don't fill up, though. You must close with the best baklava in North Beach and the best in San Francisco since that unforgettable dessert in the Plaka looking over at the Acropolis 30 years ago.

'Parhizgari' is an Arabic name signaling a desire for peace and harmony throughout one's life. A Parhizgari needs friends and society and will find what is sought

by pursuing one's passions. Elena is Nader Parhizgari's formidable achievement, his restaurant as "uplifting, inspiring, and charming" as the meaning of his name (nameslook.com/parhizgari). Let's be sure this local gem sparkles for many years. It's number one at Open Table for Mediterranean restaurants (accessed 1/10/24): opentable.com/cuisine/best-mediterranean-restaurants-north-beach-ca. Nader prefers you call, if you still use that phone for calls.



Refreshed street frontage. . © DAVID LIPKIN

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Nader, Mandana and daughter Elena, the restaurant's namesake. © DAVID LIPKIN



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(Left) Braised Lamb Shank with Israeli couscous in tomato sauce. COURTESY ELENA MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

(Right) Grilled Jumbo Prawns with Israeli couscous. COURTESY ELENA MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

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WATERFRONT
REPORT

by Greg Chiampou, Committee Chair
greg.chiampou@thd.org

The Wharf neighborhood saw 11 million visitors in 2022. Yet three iconic local restaurants—Alioto’s, Pompei’s Grotto, and Lou’s—have vacated their Port-owned Wharf leases in the past two years. Empty storefronts abound. The Wharf also has infrastructure problems, with many of its piers and docks being seismically at-risk and dilapidated. The long curved pier that encloses Aquatic Park, for example, was closed permanently after the recent earthquake.

Rather than buy into the doom and gloom, or the so-called urban “doom loop” scenario, how can the Wharf be revitalized? Some folks, including the Port commission, have ideas.

The Wharf’s local Bay views are outstanding, fishermen still ply, the ferries and tour boats are running, Pier 39’s popular attractions mostly remain as do those of Ghirardelli Square, and the shore’s two rowing/swim clubs are stroking. And now the Wharf also has a 150-foot Ferris wheel (the SkyStar Wheel) that features six-seater gondolas (including one “VIP” gondola!).

The Port inaugurated the “Pier Party at the Wharf” last summer, a concert series that featured 32 performers and commissioned a collection of new outdoor murals by Joey Rose that have a marine theme.

Perhaps the biggest initiative is a proposal to turn Fisherman’s Wharf into a place that accommodates both the fishermen and those who like fresh seafood.

REVITALIZING FISHERMAN’S
WHARF

Louis Giraudo, former scion of Boudin Bakery, along with Chris McGarry, former CEO of Save Mart Supermarkets, and Seth Hamalian, co-founder of Mission Bay Development Group, have proposed a redevelopment plan for the “zone area” just west of Pier 39. The group incorporated as the Fisherman’s Wharf Revitalization LLC, and in October 2023, the Port and Board of Supervisors granted the LLC an Exclusive Negotiation Agreement to further develop its proposal.

LLC’s goal: to turn the neighborhood into a seafood-focused attraction highlighting its historic identity as a working port, with a food hall, fish market, and seafood processing center where the public could watch workers prepare the catch of the day. Also included would be an events center, interactive museum, and short-term apartment rentals building. The proposal also envisions a new public plaza and pedestrian promenade, plus a combined winery, brewery, and distillery in an area mostly used for parking.

THD attended one of the group’s presentations at a Port-organized public meeting in early 2023. While the audience reception was mostly positive in support of revitalizing the Wharf, especially the Wharf’s “zone” along Jefferson Street between Pier 39 and Ghirardelli Square, questions were raised.

Fishermen feared the proposed project could further squeeze the fishermen’s storage facilities as well as impinge upon the delivery truck lanes that pick up the day’s catch. Other audience members cited 1990’s Proposition H, which forbids “hotels” within 100 feet

of the San Francisco shoreline. (The project’s short-term apartment rentals building was initially proposed to be in the triangle parking lot, just east of Boudin Bakery and now the site of the new Ferris wheel.)

And some merchants feared that the development of a “little Embarcadero” would turn its back on the Jefferson Street business corridor between Powell/Taylor Streets and redirect customer flows.

Upcoming Waterfront item: In January 2024, the Port of San Francisco, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and San Francisco city agencies, is expected to release its “San Francisco Coastal Waterfront Flood Study.” The Study’s purposes are to understand better current and future flood risks, identify alternatives to reduce flood risk, engage the public and stakeholders, and create opportunities for funding for flood risk reduction projects.

USACE’s recommendations are vital to gain future federal funding for San Francisco Port’s seismic and sea level rise (SLR) remediation initiatives. (See prior *Semaphore* columns that addressed the Port’s waterfront resilience initiatives.)

Alarming SLR fact: Mostly related to glacier melting, sea level rise was rapid between 1000 and 1400 AD, was stable until the late 19th century, and then started a new trajectory, rising about eight to nine inches since 1890. (Source: [noaa.gov/climate](https://www.noaa.gov/climate)) The Port and USACE are now planning for a rise of up to seven feet along the San Francisco shoreline through the end of this century.

Opinion: DON’T DESTROY HISTORIC BAY AREA
NEIGHBORHOODS TO SOLVE HOUSING CRISIS

By Christopher VerPlanck
(Reprinted with permission from the *San Jose Mercury News* and the *East Bay Times*)

In recent years, historic preservation has come under intense fire from state Sen. Scott Wiener and his YIMBY allies for allegedly interfering with housing production. However, the regional housing crisis can be solved without destroying historic neighborhoods.

I am a San Francisco-based architectural historian and historic preservation consultant who has been active in the Bay Area for 26 years. I am a committed urbanist and a lover of open space. As a Bay Area native, I remember as a child watching the last stone fruit orchards of South San Jose being bulldozed to construct endless tracts of one-story ranch houses sequestered behind beige sound walls.

Today I see the same thing happening in the outer reaches of the Bay Area and the Central Valley.

I despise low-density, auto-dependent sprawl. I believe that our cities should become more “urban,” not only to preserve our farmland but also to encourage a pedestrian-oriented way of life that is common in much of the world, including a few parts of the United States. Yes, you could call me a YIMBY.

On the other hand, I love many of our region’s historic pre-war neighborhoods and commercial districts. Although they only comprise about 9% of the urbanized Bay Area, neighborhoods such as Dogpatch and Liberty Hill in San Francisco, Downtown Petaluma, Alameda’s East End, Old Oakland and Palo Alto’s Professorville — to only name a few — are characterized by a combination of features, including walkable streets, picturesque old buildings, mature landscaping and legacy businesses that evolved organically over a long period of time rather than springing forth, fully formed, from a developer’s master plan. Older neighborhoods also often provide a wider range of housing that supports residents of varying incomes. Contrast this to most new housing developments that focus exclusively on the affluent.

Much of what the YIMBYs accuse historic preservationists of doing — including in this newspaper’s recent article “Is historic preservation just another NIMBY tactic to avoid California housing laws?” — is either exaggerated or out of date. It is true that after coming of age in the late 1960s preservation focused on properties associated with the nation’s elite. However, this has changed as the scope of what society thinks deserves protection has broadened. For example, did you know that San Francisco’s Tenderloin is the city’s largest historic district?

As a newly minted preservationist in early 2000s, I nominated San Francisco’s Dogpatch neighborhood to be the first historic district to focus on blue collar heritage. I have also listed properties associated with the region’s Indigenous, African American, Latino and Asian-Pacific Islander communities.

Preservationists are not the bad guys; we protect the diverse places that all of us love and that give our region its identity. Without historic preservation, we would have no Palace of Fine Arts, no Alamo Square, no Tonga Room, no Alcatraz and no Paramount

continued on next page

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PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Mike Rothmann, Committee Chair
mike.rothmann@thd.org

2023 has been an eventful year for the Parks & Trees Committee. Our notable accomplishments this year include winning an appeal to save trees from removal and spearheading a project to plant new trees in some of the neighborhood's long-standing empty basins. As we move forward into 2024, we will be focusing on safeguarding our recent plantings as well as the maintenance of our neighborhood parks and gardens.

Our year started with a win. We appealed a permit issued by the city's Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF) for the removal of three healthy and mature street trees. They were being threatened because of a renovation at 69 Green Street but were perfectly fine with no threat of imminent failure. Our appeal was granted along with the conditions that BUF annually maintain the trees and remove the vertical grates constricting the trunks and those around the bases. This work has not yet been done. As neighborhood zonings continue to be challenged, we need to be always vigilant to defend

Opinion *continued from previous page*

Theater. The list goes on and on.

There are many places in the Bay Area where new housing could be built. Low-density, commercial corridors such as Geary Boulevard or El Camino Real are good places to start. Surface parking lots and non-historic buildings in downtowns across the region should be replaced with new buildings, as well as converting existing office buildings into apartments or condominiums. I also fully support building accessory dwelling units and replacing non-historic single-family homes with smaller multi-unit buildings.

If preservation laws had existed before the 1960s, we could have saved many of the country's historic urban neighborhoods, such as San Francisco's Fillmore District, from being destroyed. Instead, we were able to save only a few scraps of that incredibly rich heritage. Let's not go back to those times. ❖

Christopher VerPlanck is an independent, San Francisco-based historic preservation consultant.

YEAR IN REVIEW AND LOOKING AHEAD

our mature trees, public assets that sometimes take decades to replace.

The fall was marked with a successful planting campaign. In partnership with Friends of the Urban Forest, THD teamed up with a group of fantastic volunteers and over the course of two workdays, managed to plant more than 50 trees around the neighborhood! The trees include 12 different species and are scattered throughout North Beach and Telegraph Hill. This is a great accomplishment, and we can be proud of our effort thus far. In the coming years, we will have to protect our investments. Let's continue to check that the trees are being cared for and push for filling all the remaining sites!

And, finally, to wrap up a few loose ends from some of the issues we reported on throughout the year:

The utility work in the Grace Marchant Garden has been completed. PG&E came in to underground a gas line, and, unfortunately, there is some damage and a visibly barren spot along the path where the line was buried. However, it appears that new plantings have already started to take, and no doubt by next spring, the Garden will look much fuller and be on its way to recovering under the hands of the capable gardeners.

The winners of the Pioneer Park Design Futurist Award were announced. The contest started in March and was a partnership between Friends of Pioneer Park and Pacific Horticulture. The top prize of \$350 went to a team from the University of Washington's landscape architecture department. Submissions were encouraged to focus on biodiversity and sustainability, and the winning submission reflects those criteria by

emphasizing a "mosaic" of interwoven Californian ecosystems in its design.

The designs in this contest provide a good starting point for the conversation about the maintenance of Pioneer Park. We saw many downed trees at the beginning of the year due to storms, and while I often push for increasing the density of the urban canopy and planting trees, it might be time to take another look at doing some removals in addition to replacements. Many of the cypresses below the parking lot area have outgrown their original design purpose when planted almost 100 years ago, now blocking what would otherwise be a stunning panorama of the bay. There also has been no replacement of the statue that was removed in 2020. (There was a design proposal submitted in the contest that included a cypress sculpture; in my opinion, a Macchiarini sculpture would look good on the pedestal.)

These renovations could potentially coincide with the planned structural restoration of Telegraph Hill. Some of you might have seen notices for a drone-based geotechnical assessment by Public Works scheduled to start January 19. We'll be keeping an eye on these projects as well as on the condition of our own Jack Early Park in the coming year and will be pushing to make these spaces look as beautiful as they were envisioned.

At the time of writing, we have just passed the winter solstice. This past year has been a beautiful one in San Francisco, and I hope you all enjoy our wonderful city parks and trees as the days start to grow longer and brighter. See you in the spring! ❖

VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

October 2023

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) presented its proposal for expanding North Beach's parking meter hours to help close MUNI's budget deficit. Most parking meters in San

Francisco today operate from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday but not on Sundays. SFMTA's proposal is to extend meter hours until 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays.

Concerned that the proposed new parking meter hours would impact North Beach businesses as well as nearby residential parking, the Board suggested an independent economic analysis be undertaken, comparing the increased meter revenue to lost business revenues and subsequent decrease in City tax revenue before a decision to implement the program is made. The Board also urged SFMTA to consider the impacts of the proposed program on restaurant and business workers who must drive to their jobs and requested that a range of other parking management options be studied to close MUNI's budget deficit.

Dennis Richards from "Our Neighborhood Voices" (ourneighborhoodvoices.com) discussed a proposed statewide initiative to amend the California Constitution to return zoning and land use controls, all of which have been taken away by our state legislators, to our local governments and citizens.

November 2023

On November 8th, THD held a reception followed by a night of jazz at Keys Jazz Bistro on Broadway.

Christopher Kidd presented SFMTA's Active Communities Plan, a City-wide plan to ensure that bikes, scooters, drivers, and pedestrians enjoy the City safely and effectively. The final plan should be completed by summer 2024.

THD-sponsored Films with Friends will hold the last in its 2023 series on November 15th, showing *Cinema Paradiso* and *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*.

The regular Thirsty Third Thursday at Savoy Tivoli on November 16th was followed by "Shaping San Francisco," a presentation highlighting our neighborhood's rich history. THD will award a Certificate of Honor to Shaping SF "on the occasion of its 25th anniversary as an outstanding community history project archiving stories and memories of San Francisco."

December 2023

No Board Meeting.

THD's annual membership Holiday Party will take place on December 12th at the Indie Wine and Beer Bar. ❖

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SOCIAL & PROGRAMS REPORT

by Kristen Foley, Committee Chair
kristen.foley@thd.org

Telegraph Hill Dwellers' members celebrated the holidays at the annual THD holiday gathering on December 12, 2023. Approximately 55 members joined in the fun at Indie Wine Bar. Members sipped on specially curated wines and feasted on exotic flatbreads, wagyu sliders, fresh ceviche, and more.

THD President Stan Hayes addressed the group, citing some amazing accomplishments we made this year. Some of the highlights he discussed were working to restore our urban tree canopy by filling more than 50 empty tree basins and sponsoring thousands of

dollars for new trees; partnering with the film collective Those Guys to bring the Films with Friends program, featuring exciting and innovative films, to local venues in North Beach; and providing programming such as First Fridays and Thirsty Thursdays for members to gather for fun and friendship.

Stan also discussed THD's engagement with local city officials, playing an active role in a series of important projects being brought before the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, Entertainment Commission, MUNI, the Port, and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Design Review Board. THD was busy this year! Stan thanked all of our hard-working board members and the THD community for their support. We ended this year with 100 new members!

After the President's address, Supervisor Aaron Peskin made a special appearance in between his sched-

uled events to speak with attendees, praise the work of THD, and wish all our members a happy and joyful holiday. Thank you, Supervisor Peskin!

Overall, the crowd was filled with smiling faces and joyful chatter. Members spent the evening reconnecting and making new friends. It was such a wonderful evening! We look forward to doing more events like this to bring the North Beach community together.

Last, THD would like to give a big thank you to Indie Wine Bar for being such an excellent host to this cherished event! Indie Wine Bar is located at 175 Green Street at the corner of Sansome Street. Owner Brian McGonigle and his team have created a cozy environment serving an extensive collection of wines and spectacular food choices to accompany them. If you haven't checked Indie Wine Bar out already, we highly encourage you to stop by for a sip or a bite. It's the perfect place to enjoy time with friends!



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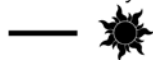
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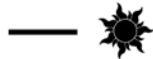
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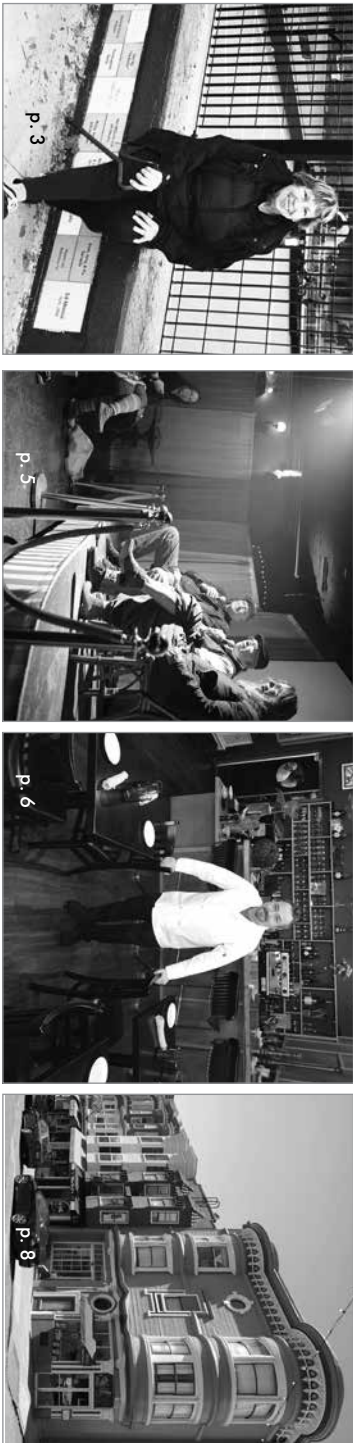
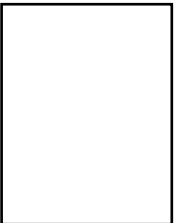
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TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS
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THE SEMAPHORE

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